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NSC FOR SINGH AND WATERS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: TAGAMMU PARTY LEADER: I WILL CLOSE DOWN THE IBN
KHALDUN CENTER

REF: A. CAIRO 3166

[B](#). CAIRO 3283

Classified By: Minister-Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
William R. Stewart, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a November 26 meeting with Rifaat Said, president of the opposition Tagammu party (a leftist, socialist-leaning party), Said told us he plans to follow through with a libel lawsuit against Saad Eddin Ibrahim (SEI), the prominent Egyptian-American democracy activist who is currently living outside of Egypt for fear of arrest, and the Ibn Khaldun Center (IKC), a civil society organization headed by SEI and funded in part by MEPI and USAID. Said's suit, which will reportedly go to trial in December, asks for LE 2 million (approximately USD 361,000) in compensation from SEI and the IKC, a figure that could financially disable the IKC. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) When we queried Said about a recent press report detailing a lawsuit he has filed against SEI and the IKC, Said confirmed that he has filed a civil suit for libel, and is asking for compensation of LE 2 million (approximately USD 361,000). The case revolves around an article written by Mokhtar Qassim, the editor-in-chief of IKC's "Civil Society" magazine, that was published in the magazine's September issue. The article is titled, "The Supreme Guide of the Lazoughly Brotherhood" and suggests that Said is a pawn of the GOE's security services. (Note: The Egyptian Ministry of Interior is located on downtown Cairo's Lazoughly Street. End note).

[1](#)3. (C) Said told us that the lawsuit will go to trial in December, and opined that "this will be an easy case for me to win the evidence of libel is crystal clear." Pointing out that the IKC does not have the financial ability to pay an LE 2 million fine, and banging on the table for emphasis, he vowed, "I will close down the Ibn Khaldoun Center!" Said alleged that he had "warned" SEI when he left Egypt that "he should freeze the activities of the IKC during his absence, as there are not competent people in place to run this delicate operation. But he wanted to keep IKC open, and this is what happened."

[1](#)4. (C) We called Barbara Ibrahim (SEI's wife, and during his absence from Egypt, a key interlocutor regarding the IKC) to query her about the lawsuit. She had not previously heard about the case, and said that she would check with SEI's lawyer about it, and get back to us. She noted that SEI and Said are "not that close," and remarked that the fact that Said is "piling on against Saad, alongside the government, is interesting in and of itself." Ibrahim said that she does not hold editor-in-chief Qassim in the highest esteem, and that he certainly wrote the article as an "individual" without SEI's approval. She noted, however, that she does not know if there is a disclaimer in the "Civil Society"

magazine to the effect that the views of each author are theirs alone, and not the IKC's.

15. (C) Comment: The IKC is now faced with a potentially disabling financial judgment in a case filed by the head of one of Egypt's most prominent opposition parties, with no obvious GOE involvement. Said's lawsuit differs from the other suits against SEI, which now total twelve, and were filed by various private citizens (several of whom are reportedly affiliated with the ruling National Democratic Party) against SEI personally for spreading false news, espionage, and attempting to harm Egypt's economy by calling for cuts in U.S. assistance to Egypt. Said's libel suit is filed against not only SEI, but also the IKC, making IKC financially vulnerable to paying the potential 2 million LE judgement (Note: The 2 million LE would be the maximum that IKC would have to pay; if a guilty verdict is reached, the judgment could be for less than the full amount Said is asking for. End note).

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